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ABSTRACT

A college-level course is described that is designed to increase oral proficiency and comprehension in Spanish and to introduce students to the culture of the Hispanic world. The course is taught in Spanish, and faculty members from other disciplines serve as guest lecturers to provide reinforcement of material learned in the areas of history, literature, government, and arts. The program consists of lectures, readings, films and slides, and class discussions. Short written compositions are required of the student in order to test reading comprehension, critical ability, and writing proficiency. This course has met with enthusiasm from both the students and the instructors involved. (Author/AM)

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HISPANIC CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION:

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EFFORT

"Spanish, like English, is a widely spoken language. No fewer than twenty sovereign nations have Spanish as their official tongue. In addition to Spain and its African possessions, we share the Western Hemisphere with Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama; in South America: Argentina, Chili, Uruguay, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Columbia and Venezuela. In the Caribbean, we have Cuba and the Dominican Republic. The U. S. also maintains close association with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Canal Zone. Spanish is also one of the official languages of the United Nations. Therefore, the conscientious study of the Spanish language and culture should provide our students valuable knowledge about today's complex and closely related world, particularly about our neighbors south."

The statement above was submitted to support the justification for the courses listed below:

SPAN 234-235-236--HISPANIC CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION I-II-III (3 cr.) (3 cr.) (3 cr.)--Prerequisite: SPAN 103 or equivalent. An introduction to Hispanic culture, with emphasis on Latin American life and civilization. Includes literature survey. Spanish is used in the classroom. May be taken as an elective in conjunction with SPAN 201-202-203. Lecture 3 hours per week.

Spanish 234-235-236 was designed to increase further the student's oral proficiency and comprehension and, at the same time, to enhance his knowledge and appreciation of the culture, customs and literature of Spain and the Latin American nations.

No special funding was required and the Department of Community Colleges approved and endorsed the course by including it in the State Curriculum Guide. The pilot course was offered during the academic year, 1972-1973.

Two main objectives were established: (1) to give the student an introduction to the culture and customs of the Hispanic world (Spain and Latin America), and (2) to increase his proficiency in the language.

The first offering attracted 14 students, ten of whom took it in conjunction with their second year language course (SPAN 201-202-203); the other four had already completed two years of Spanish and took the course as an elective in Humanities.

Five faculty members were invited as visiting guest lecturers: two from History, one from English (literature); one from Government; and one from Arts. All of them enthusiastically and readily accepted. We used the "re-inforced method," i.e., at a particular given point in the course the guest lecturer would come before the class to reinforce the material covered in the text and by my own lectures. For instance, at the beginning of the course one of the History professors gave a presentation on the early civilizations of the Americas; the other History instructor lectured on Spain at the time of the discovery of the New World. The Art instructor gave two lecture-slide presentations: one on Pre-Columbian art and one on Hispanic architecture. The English instructor discussed the expansion of Spanish literature; and, finally, the Government instructor lectured at the end of the course on comparative governments in modern Latin America.

The students enjoyed the course and participated in all projects with a great deal of enthusiasm. Upon transferring to four-year institutions, three of them opted to have double majors with Spanish as one of the two; three other students took additional courses in Spanish. The course was taught again the following year and now is offered on alternate years or during the summer when sufficient enrollment justifies its inclusion in the summer schedule.

An evaluation of the course brought about the following results:

Textbook:

Iberoamerica, by Drs. Loprete and McMahon was found to be the most suitable text for the course.

Course Development:

The course is oriented toward a social science vocabulary, and the student is thus introduced to the history, geography and government as well as the literature of the Latin American nations and Spain. Short written compositions designed to test the student's reading comprehension and critical ability as well as his writing proficiency are required. By means of a comprehensive program of lectures, readings, and class discussions supported by films and slides, the student is transported into the Hispanic world.

Grades:

The numerical equivalencies for the advanced course are essentially the same as those indicated for the basic courses; however, to obtain a passing grade the student must attend 90% of the lectures and must be an active participant in class discussion. He also must complete all assigned review work and outside reading to the satisfaction of the instructor.

Generally, the final grade is determined by scores on course-work (class discussion evaluation and mid-term graded review) and the final examination. General coursework provides the major basis for the final grade; the final examination constitutes no more than 20% of the basis.

To complete the course successfully the student must demonstrate that he has learned the fundamental cultural aspects of Spanish American civilization, i.e., that he is thoroughly familiar with the geographic setting of Latin America; with its ancient civilizations particularly the Mayans, the Aztecs and the Incas. He also should be knowledgeable about the Colonial period from the time of the discovery of the New World to the time that the Latin American nations became independent. Last, but not least, the student must demonstrate his awareness of modern Latin America by being able to discuss in class relevant topics of its own interest obtained from classroom lectures and from his own research efforts. The final grade for each quarter will be commensurate with the degree of individual work and achievement.

The letter grades for this course are broken down into the following numerical equivalencies:

Letter	Numerical	Rating
A	96-100	Outstanding/Excellent
A-	91-95	Excellent
B+	88-90	Very Good
B	83-87	Good
B-	80-82	Good/Very Satisfactory
C+	77-79	Very Satisfactory
C	73-76	Satisfactory
C-	70-72	Satisfactory/Passing
D+	67-69	Passing
D	63-66	Passing/Fair
D-	60-62	Passing/Poor
F	59 and below	Failure

An interesting off-shoot of the Hispanic Culture and Civilization course is that it constituted the basis for an introductory course produced for the use of General Electric Company employees scheduled to travel on business to Latin America. Moreover, this summarized version has developed into a segmented radio broadcast focusing on Latin America and transmitted via WVWR-FM to the Central Virginia area. The radio program was designed to survey Latin America with emphasis on the modern relationships between the area and the United States. Following is a report on the program sponsored by the HEAR Series:

> "Onda Americas"--Beginning January 13, 1976 every Tuesday and Thursday at 7:45 p.m. Edward A. Peniche, Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages, and William R. McLeRoy, Assistant Professor of History at Central Virginia Community College host this 12-part (ten minutes per program) series on Latin America Culture. Peniche and McLeRoy discuss the following topics: Man in the Americas, The Mayas, The Aztecs, The Incas, Discovery and Conquest, Colonial Latin America, Independence of Latin America, Latin America in Transition, Political Development in Latin America, Social Development in Latin America, Economic Development in Latin America, and Importance of Latin America to U.S. and the Commonwealth. The series was produced to be used by General Electric employees studying Latin American language and culture but will be useful to a general audience."[1]
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> The series is being rebroadcast during this Spring quarter (1976).

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[1]Memorandum from Barbara Creasy to HEAR respresentatives; REF: HEAR Series. Date: Jan. 6, 1976.